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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000153

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y -- CLASSIFICATION PARA 4

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: LAGE AND PEREZ ROQUE ADMIT "ERRORS" AND RESIGN ALL
POSTS; REMIREZ DE ESTENOZ OUT TOO

REF: A. HAVANA 140

[1](#)B. HAVANA 150

Classified By: COM Jonathan Farrar for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) In virtually identical letters published in the official media on March 5, former Vice President Carlos Lage and former Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque admitted that they had committed unspecified "errors" for which they assumed full responsibility, and then resigned from their remaining positions. In Lage's case this included his position as Vice President of the Council of State, Deputy in the National Assembly, Member of the Council of State, and member of the Communist Party Central Committee and Political Bureau. Perez Roque resigned from all of the same positions, except for that of Vice President.

[1](#)2. (U) Although there had been no official announcement of his departure, Fernando Remirez de Estenoz, the Communist Party chief of Foreign Relations, was replaced by the deputy chief Jorge Marti Martinez. This news became public when the media published a list of attendees at a meeting between President Raul Castro and Honduran President Zelaya which included Marti Martinez with the title of Communist Party Chief of Foreign Relations.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: The language used by Fidel to justify the firings of Lage and Perez Roque together with the tone of the published resignation letters (reminiscent of similar confessions during China's cultural revolution) have led many observers on the island to speculate that one or both may be brought to trial. Fidel's comments alone amount to a virtual charge of treason against them. The departing Japanese ambassador told COM on March 4 that changes in the foreign policy leadership had severely damaged Tokyo's plans for relations with Cuba as the GOJ had placed great hope in personal relationships with Lage, Perez Roque and former foreign trade minister De la Nuez--all now fired. Remirez de Estenoz had come up frequently in diplomatic conversations as a serious interlocutor who could improve Cuba's relations with the world. He is credited by some with being the mastermind of the GOC's very successful policy to build good relations with the other Latin American and Caribbean governments as a further bulwark against the U.S. These kinds of successes, while benefiting Cuba demonstrably, may have resulted in the downfall of their authors when they

became too closely associated with them personally.

14. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The changes may also be part of the process of preparing for the Communist Party congress, announced for later this year but for which no date has been set. As Raul continues to consolidate his power, there is growing evidence that the inner circle of Castro regime is turning further inward (and backward). A longtime (20 plus years) local observer of Cuban politics theorized last night to COM that the changes are meant to consolidate power and to lateral the succession away from the Lage/Remirez de Estenoz generation and to the military and civilian generation who cut their teeth during the Angolan war years. Speculation runs rampant: those few who truly know are not talking with us or with our diplomatic colleagues. End Comment.
FARRAR